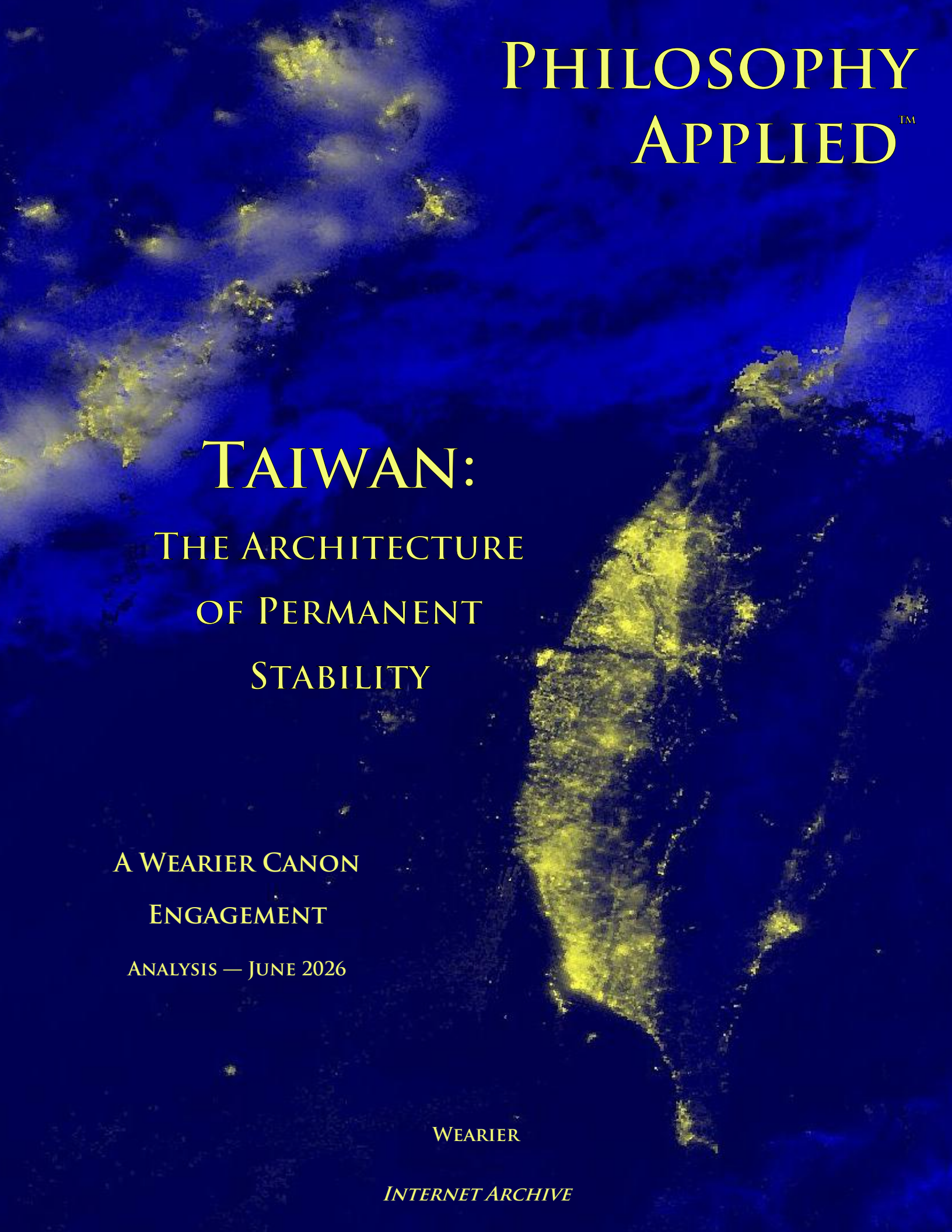

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Taiwan:

The Architecture of Permanent Stability

A Wearier Canon Engagement

Analysis — June 2026

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The Architecture of Permanent Stability

A Philosophy Applied™ Wearier Canon Analysis — June 2026

Taiwan is not one problem. It is three problems simultaneously: 1) A contested sovereignty claim unresolved since 1949; 2) The most advanced semiconductor fabrication capacity on the planet; and 3) The central node of the First Island Chain — the position from which Chinese naval power either projects into the Western Pacific or does not. Any one of these would make the island strategically significant. Together they make it the world's most overdetermined flashpoint.

Analyses that focus on one problem while neglecting the others do not fail for lack of rigor. They fail for lack of scope. Legal frameworks, supply chain diversification, military deterrence postures — each is correct on its own terms. None asks whether an architecture exists that encompasses all three, and whether a pragmatic approach that made such an architecture viable at Hormuz applies here with equal or greater force.

It does. The argument that follows makes that case.

THE HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

The modern Taiwan problem begins not with semiconductors but with defeat. The Republic of China's (ROC) retreat to Taiwan in 1949 following the Communist victory on the mainland was not a temporary repositioning — it was the freezing of a civil war that neither side could finish. The People's Republic of China (PRC) inherited the mainland and the Chinese seat at the United Nations. The ROC retained the island, the institutional structures of a functioning state, and a sovereignty claim that both governments projected in mirror image for decades: one China, disagreement only on which government legitimately represented it.

That frozen conflict produced the strategic ambiguity that has governed the Taiwan Strait ever since. The United States abandoned formal recognition of the ROC in 1979, replaced it with the Taiwan Relations Act, and committed to providing defensive arms without committing to defend the island — a posture deliberately designed to deter both a PRC attack and a ROC declaration of independence.

Ambiguity as architecture. It has held for nearly five decades, at the cost of permanent irresolution.

Into that irresolution, Morris Chang built Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC). The deliberate construction of the world's most advanced semiconductor fabrication capacity was not incidental to Taiwan's security situation — it was a response to it. A Taiwan the world cannot afford to lose is harder to attack than a Taiwan the world merely prefers to keep. The chip industry as national security policy: the most consequential act of strategic dissimulation in the postwar era.

THE GEOGRAPHIC DIMENSION

The semiconductor argument is the most visible layer. Beneath it is geography that does not change regardless of where factories are built.

Taiwan sits at the center of the First Island Chain — the arc of islands running from Japan through the Ryukyus, Taiwan, the Philippines, and into the South China Sea — that defines the boundary between China's near seas and the open Pacific. From the Chinese mainland, Taiwan is not an island. It is a door. A closed door limits the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) to the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea — contested but contained. An open door provides direct access to the Western Pacific, the Second Island Chain, and the sea lanes through which the majority of global trade moves.

This is the geometry that the PRC's naval modernization program has been built around for three decades. The PLAN's expansion — carrier strike groups, submarine fleet, anti-ship missile systems — is not abstract power projection. It is the systematic construction of the capability to open that door. Taiwan is not the objective. It is the key.

The United States understands this with equal precision. The forward deployment posture in the Pacific — bases in Japan, Guam, the Philippines — is the architecture of a closed door held shut. The Taiwan Relations Act is not primarily about Taiwan. It is about the Western Pacific remaining a domain in which American naval power can operate without contest.

The chip industry can be dispersed. The geography cannot.

The deterrent architecture holding Taiwan's door shut does not operate in isolation. The same carrier strike groups, the same command attention, the same institutional bandwidth currently committed to the Strait of Hormuz stalemate are the instruments

on which a Taiwan contingency would draw. These are not independent commitments. They are competing demands on the same dissipative entity. A system maintaining two high-pressure equilibria simultaneously does not fail. But it thins. The architecture proposed here addresses that pressure directly — before the thinning reaches the threshold at which the deterrent loses credibility.

THE GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE

The Hormuz precedent is instructive. The International Strait Authority (ISA) proposal, filed March 14, 2026, addressed a governance vacuum that had persisted for a century despite correct diagnosis, rigorous legal analysis, and repeated operational failure. Its governing logic was precise: make the cost of challenging the strait's permanent administration higher than the cost of accepting it, for every actor simultaneously. Not by resolving the legal dispute. Not by building superior military capability. By converting unilateral resource control into a multilateral utility in which every dependent actor held a direct financial stake in the strait's continued function.

The Taiwan problem is more complex. There is no jurisdiction vacuum — there is an excess of jurisdictional claims. There is no single resource chokepoint — there are two, one manufactured and one geographical, each sufficient to make the island strategically critical. And there is no neutral administrative space in which a governance instrument can be inserted without engaging the sovereignty question that every party has spent seven decades avoiding.

The architecture that follows does not resolve the sovereignty question. It does something more useful: it makes the question less consequential than the alternative. A Taiwan whose chip industry operates as an internationally governed utility, and whose geographic position is secured by a multilateral framework in which every dependent economy holds a direct stake, is a Taiwan whose status becomes functionally irrelevant to the resource calculus. Not resolved. Superseded.

That is the ISA logic applied at higher complexity. The resource imperative is not overcome. It is redirected — toward a structure that every dependent actor, including the PRC, has more to gain from sustaining than from destroying.

The stakeholder logic extends beyond the Pacific Rim. TSMC's advanced node production is not a regional resource. It is the substrate on which the technological infrastructure of every major economy depends — American defense systems, European automotive and industrial capacity, Japanese and Korean manufacturing, and the Chinese telecommunications sector that the PRC's own development model requires. A governance architecture in which the European Union, Japan, South

Korea, the United States, and the PRC all hold direct financial stakes in Taiwan's continued function is not a regional arrangement. It is a global utility — and the calculus that makes closure irrational becomes more binding the wider the stakeholder net is drawn. The ISA parallel is precise: Persian Gulf states plus major energy customers. Taiwan plus every economy whose technological infrastructure depends on advanced fabrication.

The architecture's reach, however, is only as stable as its material foundations. Advanced semiconductor fabrication depends on rare earth elements — in polishing compounds, optical systems, deposition processes, and the equipment that makes fabrication possible. Approximately sixty percent of global rare earth mining and a significantly higher share of processing capacity are controlled by the PRC. A governance framework that secures the finished resource while leaving the material supply chain as unilateral leverage does not eliminate the pressure point. It relocates it. Supply chain diversification — like manufacturing diversification — is a necessary and ongoing hedge. Neither operates on the timeline the current strategic environment requires. The governance architecture must function in the world as it is. The relationship between rare earth supply chain governance and the architecture of permanent semiconductor stability is the subject of a further analysis.

THE STAKEHOLDER ARGUMENT

The Republic of China position is existential and unambiguous. A Taiwan secured by multilateral architecture is a Taiwan that survives. The sovereignty question — whether the island is ultimately Chinese, Taiwanese, or something the international system has never quite named — becomes secondary to the fact of continued existence. The ROC has spent seven decades under the threat of absorption or destruction. An architecture that makes both structurally irrational is not a compromise. It is the outcome every Taiwanese government has been working toward without an adequate instrument to achieve it.

The United States position is strategic and equally clear. The objective has never been Taiwan's sovereignty as such — it has been a Western Pacific that remains open to American naval power and closed to uncontested PRC projection. A multilateral framework that permanently secures Taiwan without requiring the United States to enter conflict is not a strategic retreat.

The PRC position is where the argument does its hardest work. Beijing's stated objective is reunification. The multilateral architecture does not deliver reunification. What it delivers is the next most valuable thing: a Taiwan that cannot be used as a forward base against the Chinese mainland, a chip industry in which China holds a

direct financial stake, and a stable Pacific equilibrium in which Chinese naval development proceeds without the trigger of conflict.

The prize that cannot be won by force becomes, under this architecture, partially available without it.

THE THIRD AXIS

A third axis of resource competition pressure operates simultaneously. The war in Ukraine has imposed sustained demands on the same Western institutional capacity — military, financial, diplomatic — that a Taiwan contingency would require. The thinning is not hypothetical. The relationship between Ukrainian territorial integrity, European energy independence, and the broader architecture of Western deterrence is the subject of a future analysis.

THE CASE

The architecture proposed here is unprecedented. It does not resolve the sovereignty question. It does not eliminate the geographic tension of the First Island Chain. It does not ask any party to abandon its stated position. It asks something more pragmatic and more difficult: whether the cost of the alternative — a conflict that destroys the prize, disrupts the global chip supply, and forecloses Pacific stability for a generation — is a price any dependent actor can rationally afford.

The answer, examined in realistic terms, is no. The architecture exists, only requiring a system capable of adopting it.

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International Strait Authority (ISA) timestamps: Original proposal March 14, 2026 · First update March 21, 2026 · Second update March 27, 2026 · Third update April 8, 2026 · Fourth update May 12, 2026. All documents publicly available at the Internet Archive: https://archive.org/details/Proposal_Permanent_Governance_Strait-of-Hormuz